

ORNITHOLOGICAL LITERATURE

A CHECK-LIST OF THE BIRDS OF VIRGINIA. By Joseph James Murray. Virginia Society of Ornithology (obtainable from A. O. English, 2803 Rosalind Ave., S.W., Roanoke), 1952:6×9 in., 113 pp. \$1.50.

This booklet (paper-bound, photo-offset) will be a definite asset to students of Virginia birds, who have long lacked an up-to-date, competently prepared summary of the avifauna of that state. Students in neighboring areas should also find it useful. A brief preface, a rather extensive and interesting survey of the long history and development of ornithology in Virginia, a short account of physical features and faunal zones (*i. e.*, the Life Zones of Merriam; biomes are mentioned but not discussed), and a selected bibliography are followed in the work by the accounts of 415 forms: 348 species (11 of which are indicated as being of hypothetical occurrence by the use of parentheses), 64 additional subspecies, 13 of them hypothetical, and 3 hybrids (counting Sutton's Warbler).

The accounts, in telegraphic form and usually less than a half page in length, summarize in the briefest possible way the known abundance, distribution, and seasons of occurrence of each form, giving citations for particularly interesting records and the names of authorities for many other statements. In the space employed it has obviously been impossible to give citations for much of the material. A more elaborate edition, said in the work to be under consideration, is to be hoped for.

Apparently most or all of the taxonomic work on Virginia birds has been done by others and has not been critically reviewed by the author. Some of the subspecies listed are of rather tenuous distinctness, or have been included on the basis of one or a few specimens identified years ago. The accounts of the subspecies are headed, in the time-honored fashion, in the same manner as those of the species, a usage that places undue emphasis on the minor categories, and which I hope to see gradually abandoned in the future. A map would have added to the usefulness of the volume.—Robert M. Mengel.

A FIELD GUIDE TO THE MAMMALS. By William Henry Burt and Richard Philip Grossenheider. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1952:4½×7¼ in., xxiv+200 pp., 24 color pls., 13 black and white pls., 168 maps, and numerous text figs. \$3.75.

Occasionally there appears in the literature of field zoology a book of great usefulness to amateur and professional alike. Such a book is the new volume by Burt and Grossenheider. The authors have prepared a handbook employing for the North American mammals the same techniques of illustration and identification as those so successfully employed by Roger Tory Peterson for the birds. Additionally, maps are included which give the known—and in some cases the supposed—geographic distribution of the various species.

The text and maps by Burt are models of brevity and accuracy. Each species account includes a terse statement on characteristics, similar species, and remarks on distribution and habitat. In all, 373 species are treated—a most conservative number. A few other species are mentioned only casually, but for the most part these are small groups of interest mainly to the specialist. With the aims of the authors in mind, such a treatment needs no apology. Subspecies are completely omitted.

The distribution maps will be of great interest to mammalogists. Although the authors freely admit that some inaccuracies probably occur in the maps owing to omissions, com-